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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 3157
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3577
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 5951
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 3720
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 5000
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 1599
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 9592
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0191
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C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 000390

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STATE FOR PM - DAS MCDONALD, NEA/MAG, NEA/RA AND EUR/RPM
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TAGS: [MARR PREL](#) [PINS](#) [MCAP](#) [MO](#)

SUBJECT: MOROCCO SIGNALS DESIRE FOR CLOSER SECURITY TIES TO
THE U.S. AND NATO

REF: A. STATE 20339

[1](#)B. RABAT 01730

Classified By: DCM Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Senior Moroccan military and diplomatic officials indicate that they would give serious consideration to the Status of Forces Agreement, but needed to review the U.S. draft. Morocco's Inspector General of the Armed Forces (CHOD) General Bennani recently pledged to sign the Acquisition and Cross Service Agreement (ACSA) with the United States on or before the Defense Consultative Committee meeting in mid-June in Rabat. Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) International Security Office Director Karim Halim recently told Pol/MilOff that the Government of Morocco (GOM) is moving to enhance security ties with the United States. He said the GOM is also seeking to improve relations with NATO but opined that NATO outreach efforts toward Morocco were "too little and too slow." Following its recently signed military hardware acquisitions from the U.S., France, Spain, Belgium and The Netherlands, Halim said that Morocco is willing to participate in Operation Active Endeavor--though substantial engagement in the operation may take years--and pursue a NATO Individual Cooperation Program.
End Summary.

Morocco Reviewing Separate SOFA and ACSA Proposals

[1](#)2. (C) In a meeting with Ambassador Riley on April 18, 2008, Moroccan Armed Forces Inspector General (CHOD) General Bennani pledged that the GOM would sign the Acquisition and Cross Service Agreement (ACSA) before the Defense Consultative Committee meeting, scheduled for June 10-12, 2008 in Rabat.

[1](#)3. (C) On April 3, 2008, PolOff met with International Security Office Director Karim Halim to discuss bilateral security issues. Reporting directly to MFA Director General Yousef Amrani, Halim is our principal interlocutor on political/military and counterterrorism affairs. In addition

to reporting progress on the ACSA, Halim said that the GOM was favorably reviewing the U.S.-proposed Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) but that additional study of the proposed document will be necessary. The proposed SOFA text (Ref A), which had been forwarded to MFA by the Embassy on March 11 via diplomatic note, was currently under review by MFA's Office of Treaties and Judicial Affairs and the Ministry of Defense. Halim ventured that it will take approximately one to two months for the GOM to deliver an amended text for USG consideration.

Keen on NATO But Unsatisfied with Status Quo

¶4. (C) Halim said that the GOM had favorably reached consensus on Morocco working toward participation in Operation Active Endeavor (OAE)--an ongoing maritime interdiction operation--and that the GOM intended to make a formal announcement of this intent within the next two months. However, in a recent meeting with U.S. embassy military officers, Moroccan Chief of Naval Operations Rear Admiral Mohammed Berrada Gouzi said that it would take three to five years for the Moroccan navy to acquire the equipment and expertise for practical participation in OAE.

¶5. (C) Halim also said that the GOM, after consultations with the Embassy and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), had reached consensus on moving forward with signing a NATO Individual Cooperation Program (ICP). While moving forward on the ICP, Halim said that the GOM, at the same time, was growing increasingly frustrated with NATO because of a growing perception within the Moroccan Ministry of Defense and MFA that Morocco's relationship with NATO was

becoming imbalanced, i.e., that Morocco was getting less out of NATO than NATO was getting out of Morocco, a criticism previously voiced by the MFA (Ref B).

¶6. (C) When asked how this perceived imbalance might be rectified, Halim tabled that NATO should reward Morocco's forward-leaning posture with NATO with more political dialogue and material support. Halim questioned the utility of having Morocco train with NATO equipment, only to have that equipment returned to NATO after the exercise. He added that Morocco had purchased a secure communications system at NATO behest, capable of NATO compatibility, only to find out later that NATO had not yet acquired the compatible system. Halim considered NATO's engagement with Morocco as "too little and too slow."

¶7. (C) Recently, the Moroccan military began inviting our military attaches to tour military installations--a limited move, but a step forward from the Moroccan military's traditional isolation.

¶8. (C) Comment: The Embassy has been receiving positive signals from MFA about Morocco's pursuit of closer military relations with the United States and NATO, reflecting some of what we have heard from mid-level military officials. In addition to the recent purchase of 24 F-16s from the United States, Morocco has also recently purchased equipment from France, Spain, Holland, and Belgium--all indicative of modernization efforts and fostering improved relations with NATO. It cannot be excluded that Morocco's more upbeat views on NATO may reflect, in part, the changed French perspective on the alliance. End Comment.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

Riley